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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000681

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL DREIER MEETS WITH NEPAL'S PRIME MINISTER  
THAPA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI FOR REASONS 1.5 b & d

11. (C) Summary: In an April 9 meeting with CODEL Dreier, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa reviewed the Government of Nepal's (GON) three-pronged strategy to return to a more stable political and economic path: public security, increased assistance to grassroots areas and democratic government. He said the GON was consulting with party leaders by telephone and would work with them to arrange elections and the transition to a democratic government. The door was open to the parties and the Maoists to return to talks at any time. Thapa told the Ambassador that the new 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew and limits on public assembly in Kathmandu were imposed to avoid confrontation during demonstrations against the government. GON has learned that Maoists have infiltrated the demonstrations and intend to cause trouble, he explained. Thapa thanked the U.S. for its years of development assistance and recent military support. Both have been important for GON and Royal Nepal Army (RNA) morale. End Summary.

12. (C) The Chairman of the House Rules Committee David Dreier (R-Ca) accompanied by Representative Karen McCarthy (D-Mo) and Representative Grace Napolitano (D-Ca) began the meeting by noting the extraordinary challenges that the Government of Nepal (GON) faces so that its people can live a better life in a peaceful, stable and democratic country. Prime Minister Thapa thanked the delegation for its visit, adding that Nepal is pleased to have frequent U.S. visitors at all levels, which now include Congress. The Chairman said he was concerned with recent developments in Nepal and asked what steps the GON was taking to re-establish a democratic government and end the Maoist threat.

13. (C) PM Thapa replied that GON has a three-pronged strategy: (1) assure public security; (2) increase the flow of development assistance to the grassroots; and (3) a return to a democratic government. In this latter, the GON wants the constitutional process to move forward with political party participation. The GON has set a timeframe for multi-party elections and hopes that the parties will take part, as King Gyanendra stated in Pokhara earlier in the week. After elections, the GON will consult with the parties to set the modalities for the new government. Talks are already taking place with party leaders telephonically, he said. The politicians want to talk to the King, who has already held two rounds with them. Thapa said he believed that the next talks will take place soon.

14. (C) Representatives McCarthy and Napolitano focused on the Maoist problem. Rep. McCarthy inquired about GON strategies to work with the political groups to address the Maoist threat. Thapa reiterated that the government seeks to raise public spirit by increasing the standard of living and has sent development teams to villages toward this end. The GON remains ready to hold talks again with the Maoists even though the insurgents previously walked out of talks unilaterally twice. The door for negotiations remains open. The Maoists claim that they want a "republic," but are not sure what that means. Talks fell apart the last time (August 2003) over the government's plan for social reforms, he observed. The GON intends to uphold the constitutional monarchy and a multi-party democracy. Rep. Napolitano suggested that economic and infrastructure development could put people to work and improve public livelihood. Nepal's natural resources, such as hydropower, could be developed. Thapa replied that the GON was definitely concerned and making efforts to build tourism and infrastructure to improve the nation's economy.

15. (C) Ambassador Malinowski asked the PM to explain the government's rationale for imposing restrictions on public gatherings (11 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew and prohibition on public assembly of more than five persons) in downtown Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Kirtipur, announced the night before (April 8). Thapa said that the measures were taken to avoid casualties during the daily party demonstrations. The GON believes, he explained, that the demonstrators are infiltrated by Maoists who will try to provoke violence. Asked how long these measures would be in place, Thapa said that the government is determined that these restrictions should not last more than two or three days, "as has been the case in the past." Thapa acknowledged that the parties might believe that the GON "acted in haste" in imposing the bans and predicted that the measures would not interfere with the

next protest (April 9). He painted a scenario wherein the authorities detain protesters to avoid confrontations, then release them soon afterward.

16. (C) The Ambassador told the PM that Chairman Dreier would like to speak with His Majesty. Thapa confirmed that the King was returning to Kathmandu that afternoon (April 9) and offered to help arrange a conversation.

17. (C) The PM closed by reiterating Nepal's gratitude for all of the help that the United States has given the Nepali people over the years, including economic and social development assistance and malaria eradication. Chairman Dreier said he had spoken with Secretary of State Powell before the trip, who recalled the beauty of Nepal and the warmth of its people. The U.S. desires to make a difference through assistance. At the same time, the American people also face serious challenges at the moment. That does not diminish their desire to help the people of Nepal and to see an end to human rights violations and to curfews and a path to self-determination. The U.S. wants to work in any way possible against the Maoist terrorists, the Chairman affirmed. The Prime Minister thanked the U.S. for the concrete and moral support it has given Nepal, which has been very effective and been a great boost for both Royal Nepal Army and GON morale. Noting the GON's recent reaffirmation of twenty-five human rights principles, Thapa repeated that the country is very serious about meeting its international obligations in this area.

18. (U) CODEL Dreier has cleared this cable.

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